

MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM ETHICS AND FIDUCIARY POLICY

PURPOSE

The policies and procedures in this document govern compliance with the Code of Governmental Ethics as defined in Louisiana Revised Statutes Title 42: Chapter 15.

OBJECTIVE

It has been and will be the policy of the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) Board of Trustees and its employees to uphold the highest standards of ethical, fiduciary and professional behavior.

The Executive Director shall implement this policy for all staff members.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the following persons:

1. Employees of MERS
2. Persons appointed or elected to the Board of Trustees and/or their designees.
3. Vendors are not obligated to participate in the training requirements unless acting in the scope of a "public employee" as interpreted by the Board of Ethics.

POLICIES

Compliance

1. MERS Board of Trustees and its employees shall comply with the ethical standards and prohibitions as set forth in Louisiana Revised Statutes 42:1111-1124.6 <http://ethics.la.gov/Pub/Laws/Title42Ch15.pdf>, including all laws, regulations, and interpretations of the code of ethics, as amended from time to time by the legislature.
2. MERS Board of Trustees and its employees are required to receive one (1) hour of ethics training each year. Training may be received at conferences, through online training approved by the Louisiana Ethics Board, or through a Certified Ethics Trainer.
3. MERS Board of Trustees and its employees, where applicable, shall comply with the fiduciary and investment responsibilities as set forth in Louisiana Revised Statutes 11:261 – 269, including all laws, regulations, and interpretations of those responsibilities, as amended from time to time by the legislature.
4. MERS Board of Trustees and its employees shall also dedicate themselves to carrying out the mission of this organization and shall:
 - Hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public in the performance of professional duties.
 - Act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance personal and professional honor, integrity and the dignity of the profession.

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- Treat with respect and consideration all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, marital or family status, disability, age or national origin.
- Engage in carrying out MERS mission in a professional manner.
- Collaborate with and support other professionals in carrying out MERS mission.
- Build professional reputations on the merit of services and refrain from competing unfairly with others.
- Recognize that the chief function of MERS at all times is to serve the best interest of its members.
- Accept as a personal duty the responsibility to keep up to date on emerging issues and to conduct themselves with professional competence, fairness, impartiality, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Respect the structure and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, provide them with facts and advice as a basis for their making policy decisions, and uphold and implement policies adopted by the Board of Trustees.
- Keep the members informed about issues affecting them.
- Conduct organizational and operational duties with positive leadership exemplified by open communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion.
- Exercise whatever discretionary authority they have under the law to carry out the mission of MERS.
- Serve with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness in carrying out MERS mission.
- Demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fortitude in all activities in order to inspire confidence and trust in such activities.
- Avoid any interest or activity that is in conflict with the conduct of their official duties.
- Respect and protect privileged information to which they have access in the course of their official duties.
- Strive for personal and professional excellence and encourage the professional development of others.

Monitoring

To determine that MERS Board of Trustees and its employees are in compliance with the Code of Governmental Ethics, the following will occur:

1. The Executive Director maintains an open-door policy for reporting any violations of the Code of Governmental Ethics.
2. The Executive Director encourages questions and discussions among MERS Board of Trustees and its employees to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations.
3. The Executive Director reviews all actions by the MERS Board of Trustees and its employees to ensure compliance with the letter and spirit of all ethics rules and regulations.

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4. The Executive Director approves and reviews the details of money received or spent on behalf of MERS, as necessary.
5. All policies and procedures concerning operations of MERS are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance with “best practices”, ethics regulations, and state laws.
6. All gifts received by the retirement system are returned to the vendor, or if edible, donated to local charities (i.e., Battered Women’s Shelter, etc.).
7. The Retirement System (Board Secretary/Office Manager) will monitor ethics training hours for MERS Board of Trustees and its employees and maintain appropriate documentation.
8. The Retirement System (Board Secretary/Office Manager) will monitor Legislative required educational hours for Board of Trustee members and will report annually to the House/Senate Retirement Committees.
9. At the end of the fiscal year, MERS Board of Trustees and its employees will attest through signature verification that they have read the entity’s ethics policy (Exhibit A and Exhibit B).

Violations

MERS strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual for filing an ethics complaint or for participating in an ethics investigation. All allegations of retaliation will be swiftly and thoroughly investigated. Individuals who engage in retaliatory conduct are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The following actions will be taken for any potential violations of the Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics:

1. The Executive Director shall file confidential reports with the Ethics Board or panel on any matters that come to his/her attention which are believed to constitute a violation of the ethics code.
2. The Executive Director shall cooperate in every possible manner in connection with any investigation or hearing which may be lawfully conducted by the Ethics Board or panel.
3. The Executive Director shall comply with any lawful order received from the Ethics Board or panel and shall immediately take disciplinary action against any employee under his supervision when ordered to do so by the Ethics Board or panel.
4. Conduct which may violate the Ethics Code may also be in violation of the policies of MERS and may subject an employee who engages in such conduct to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

EXHIBIT A
EMPLOYEE ATTESTATION

I, _____, hereby attest that I have read and understand the MERS Ethics and Fiduciary Policy and have been notified of any changes as indicated by my signature below.

Signature:

Title:

Date:

EXHIBIT B
TRUSTEE ATTESTATION

I, _____, hereby attest that I have read and understand the MERS Ethics and Fiduciary Policy and have been notified of any changes as indicated by my signature below.

Signature: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____